



Inside CFSA



For Our Child-Serving Community

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CFSA Outlines Spending Plan For Senate Appropriation

In February, the U.S. Senate and House appropriated \$9 million for CFSA and \$3.9 million for the Department of Mental Health for improvements in the foster care system of the District of Columbia. The money is targeted for specific purposes including intensive early intervention, student loan forgiveness, computer services and respite care programs.

The portion of the \$9 million appropriated for early intervention will allow CFSA to launch and staff a new Family Team Meeting initiative that will fully incorporate early intervention strategies into case management. CFSA policies and practices will require social workers to partner and meet with families, communities and private agencies to ensure the permanence, well being and safety of children. Family Team Meetings are the fulcrum for practice change at the agency and will make certain that families are engaged, have a voice and are central to decision making affecting children at the time of removal or replacement. FTM also will work to expedite permanence either at home or elsewhere and establish that social workers base their decisions on the best possible information.

In addition, CFSA will use this money to make emergency support funds available to relatives who lack physical space, transportation, furnishings or other needs to help them provide safe and proper care for children in foster care.

The recruitment and retention of highly qualified social workers is critical to the successful reform of the district's child welfare system. Social workers typically enter the field because they care deeply about service, but the burden of substantial student loans often deters them from accepting and continuing the extremely challenging work of serving the most needy families and children in care. The new funds from Congress for student loan repayments can provide a powerful new incentive to encourage highly qualified social workers with BSW and MSW degrees to accept and extend their tenure in the District. With experienced social workers, CFSA can meet and maintain caseload standards in accordance with national quality standards.

The federal money will also be used to significantly improve the availability, security and reliability of computer technology for social workers. Mainly, CFSA's FACES case management system will be moving from client-server technology to a user-friendly, web-based technology so that workers and external users, including private agencies that

provide care for nearly one-third of CFSA's foster children, have access to improve service delivery.

Congress has also appropriated \$3.9 million to the Department of Mental Health (DMH) to provide mental health screenings, assessments and treatment for children under the supervision of CFSA. Often, the trauma of separation and multiple placements and transitions once children are involved in the child welfare system aggravate mental health problems in children and families. In many jurisdictions around the country, these issues are further compounded by a lack of appropriate, quality mental health services and by long waits for assessment and treatment, further placing families and children in jeopardy. Congress has set out very specific goals for the timely provision of these services. Both DMH and CFSA believe this will make a significant difference to the well being of children and families.

CFSA also will work closely with the Washington Metropolitan Council of Governments (COG) and the Foster and Adoptive Parents Association as they initiate a new respite care program for the foster parents caring for CFSA's children. Congress allocated \$1.1 million directly to COG for this activity.

CFSA Prom and Graduation Project 2004

On March 8 the CFSA Labor Management Partnership Council and the Office of Volunteer Services launched Project Prom and Graduation 2004, an initiative to collect formal wear and accessories for CFSA's graduating seniors. The goal is to collect items to benefit 200 CFSA youth. During the first phase of the project, CFSA will be collecting formal dresses, tuxedos/suits, shoes, jewelry, purses, other accessories, new hosiery and gift cards. The second phase will be a workshop for teens that will include an etiquette class, facials, manicures and make-up sessions.

On **April 6-9, 2004**, CFSA's Volunteer Services will be collecting formal wear and accessories in CFSA's visitation rooms located on the first floor at 400 6th St., S.W. The Prom Preparation Workshop also will be held at the 6th Street location on Saturday, April 17, 2004. Interested donors or volunteers can call the Office of Volunteer Services at 202-727-7095 or email nwhipss@cfsa-dc.org for more information.

CFSA Public Information faxes this newsletter monthly to providers and other partners. To provide comments or to update your fax number, call (202) 442-4246. Editor: Niki Mitchell. ■